LITTLE RAY AND HER FRIENDS

RUTH ELLIOTT

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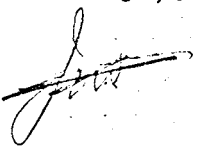

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LITTLE RAY AND HER FRIENDS.

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THEY SAW THE LITTLE FIGURE CROUCHED IN THE SHADOW OF THE DOORWAY.—*See p.* 20.

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Little Ray and her Friends.

BY

RUTH ELLIOTT,

AUTHOR OF "MARGERY'S CHRISTMAS BOX," "A VOICE FROM THE SEA," ETC., ETC.

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Haunted.

FOR the last few months I have been haunted! Haunted by a Spectre, in the shape of a child—a little, ragged, miserable waif!

Some months ago I was walking in great haste through Finsbury Circus, when my attention was arrested by what at a distance appeared only a bundle of rags. He was a little lad, of perhaps nine or ten years of age—it may be rather more, for the growth of these outcasts is stunted by privation and want.

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Bare feet, one on the top of the other, for the sake of warmth; trousers, ending at the knees in a fringe of rags, held up by strings across the shoulders! Sleeveless jacket, open to the waist in front; no shirt; one shoulder pushed out, showing plainly red marks caused by the strings that served for braces; a head covered with rough fair hair, thick and wavy, covered with dirt, but with pretty, regular, childish features; eyes gazing into vacancy, dull and expressionless; doing nothing, and thinking—ah, God only knows what the little one was thinking of! This is my spectre! It was impossible then to stop and question him, so the name and home of my little spectre will for ever remain unknown. For half a minute we stood and watched him, as his thin fingers closed eagerly over all that our pocket contained—a penny and a big peppermint. For a moment or two he did not look at what he so eagerly grasped, but clasped his hand tightly, as if afraid the treasure would be taken away. Then the thin fingers

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slowly unclasped, and he gazed at the coin and its companion. I expected a gleam of childish pleasure, perhaps a smile; but he turned his head as we slowly passed on, and looked at us with an expression of utter astonishment.

There was no pleasure in the wistful little face, only wonder. Why had we given him anything?—he had not begged!

He little knew the silent appeal he was making. Silent, but pathetic and powerful in its very silence.

I looked back as we turned the corner, and there he stood in the same listless attitude, with his face turned toward us, and it photographed itself then on my memory. I wonder what he was thinking of. Did a vision of childish joys pass before him? Was he calling to remembrance the gay laugh and merry play of the well-dressed, happy-looking children he had seen in some unwonted ramble in the parks? Did he wonder why they were so different from what he was? Was he

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thinking of that night last winter when he climbed the rails and peeped in the curtained window before the blinds were drawn, and watched the children at play—Papa in the midst as noisy as the noisiest, but always taking such care of the tiny fair-haired maiden whose rough, strong brothers sometimes forgot her, and tumbled over her in their boisterous fun; and the mother sat in the big arm-chair, which looked like a throne to the longing watcher, and enjoyed the fun as much as any of them. Did the little hand brush away the unbidden tear from the dim eyes as he asked himself, "Where is *my* mother? where is *my* father? Why have I not a happy home, and nice things to eat and clothes to wear? Where are my brothers and sisters?" Alas, alas! desolate little thinker! Such thoughts as these have perplexed many a brain, older than yours!

Was he thinking of that wonderful place, "the country," where actually such ragged children as he

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could play on the green grass and under the trees, and gather flowers and fruit.

Strange thoughts pass through a child's brain; who shall divine them? But perhaps he was only thinking of his dinner, pondering over the best means to procure something to eat. Nothing for breakfast but some half-rotten turnips! Nothing for dinner but what he can beg or steal or pick up from the gutters!

Tea!—a meal unheard of. What is it? Supper—alas! a rarity—then *bed*.

Fathers and Mothers! put the cherished darlings to to bed, kiss the rosy lips, put out the light, say the last "Good-night," and come with me to other bedsides. Not in warm comfortable rooms, protected from the cold night air, but down dark, dirty alleys; in filthy cellars reeking with damp, poisonous odours. Under dim arches, down by the river-side.

Look at this bed—an old barrel! Stoop down, look at the occupants—two little lads clasped in each other's

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arms. Eyes closed, limbs still; the children are asleep. Look at the blankets, the sheets, the pillows. Dirt and rags! Draw close the curtain of thick river fog, wish them "*Good-night.*" Hush! Don't make a noise, you will *awake the children!* What will the awakening bring? Listen, I will tell you. Hunger and cold; theft or starvation; misery and sin. Little hands, growing daily more expert at their dangerous employment. Little hearts growing daily more callous. Then dark prison walls put for a time a barrier in the rapid downward course; but their entrance into the busy, noisy world brings fresh crimes, new sins, and at last all that is good seems to have faded away, leaving only the semblance of a man—a man with the heart of a fiend. A curse to his country, a curse to himself, whose end—what *can* be the end of *such a life!*

"Feed my lambs." Christians, is this command binding on you? Do you admit the claims of these little ones on your sympathy and aid? Are you doing

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your utmost for them? When your children are clustering round you, speak to them of their brothers and sisters who are homeless and friendless, whose lives are so joyless and sad. Teach them to sympathise with the sorrowful. Tell them the dear Saviour has promised an especial reward and blessing to the children's friend. And when at night the little hands are folded, and the eyes closed in prayer, teach them to pray for the outcast, and surely the children's prayer for the children will reach the Father's ear.

Friends of the children, remember, "Whoso receiveth one such little child in My name receiveth Me."

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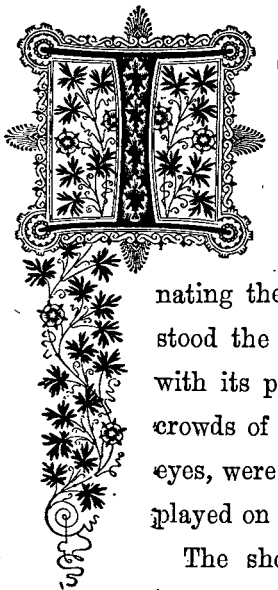
Nellie's Christmas.



IT was Christmas-eve, and London's broad streets were full of life and noise. From the shop windows and doors streamed floods of bright light, illuminating the passers-by. In some windows stood the ever-fascinating Christmas-tree, with its profusion of brilliant fruit; and crowds of children, with longing, covetous eyes, were watching the tempting toys displayed on the drooping boughs.

The shops were thronged with merry customers. There was papa, looking on

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with a good-natured smile, while mamma selected Noah's arks, and balls, and fairy-like dolls' houses. There were groups of warmly-dressed children, who had come out with father and mother to see the sights and choose their own Christmas presents. Santa Claus was busy everywhere, and all was bustle and noise.

It was getting late, and little Ray stood doubtfully at the entrance of a dark alley. The streets were bright and cheerful, and Ray eyed them wistfully. A struggle was going on within, between self and the little sick sister at home; but it was soon over, and with a last look at the busy scene before her Ray turned, and the two little bare feet pattered down into darkness. Past groups of swearing, quarrelling men and women! past children, young in years, but old in vice, with oaths upon their lips, and crime written on their faces; down into the depths of the wretched court, ran little Ray.

Stopping at last, she opened a door, and stepped

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softly across the dark room to a heap of rags in one corner. "Are you asleep, Nell?" she whispered.

"No," said a faint little voice, "I'm so glad you've come, Ray; I'm so cold."

Ray crept in among the rags, and nestled close to the shivering little form. "I thought you wouldn't sleep, so I run home. I say, Nell, I've got two pennies. A gentleman, he shoved against me, and I fell, and then he give me two pennies! I'll give you one. Don't you wish I'd get knocked down every day? I do. What'll you buy with your penny, Nell? I think I'll have hot 'taters; but oh! there's prime pudden in a shop round the corner, reg'lar spotty! Jim says they gives such a big slice for a penny! I wish you was well and could come 'long with me, perhaps you'd get two pennies too, and then we could have 'taters and pudden!" And Ray sighed regretfully.

"You can have both," murmured Nellie; "I'm not hungry, Ray."

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"But you will be to-morrow," said Ray; "you shall have a horange, if you'd rather; you wanted one this morning. Hush! here's mother!"

The door was flung open, and a volley of curses, and a drunken stagger on the floor, told of the coming home of "mother." The children lay silent till she had groped her way to a further corner, and, throwing herself on some rags was soon in a heavy sleep.

"Nellie," whispered Ray, "what's Christmas?"

"Christmas?" murmured Nellie; "is it Christmas?"

"Jim says to-morrow is, and he said, 'Happy Christmas' to me—what's that?"

"Christmas is a day;—he meant he hoped you'd have a happy day," replied Nellie, with a quivering voice.

"I don't guess it'll be very happy, 'less something happens," said Ray, doubtfully. "I'll have to run out 'fore mother wakes, or she'll whack me; she allers does after she's been reg'lar drunk. Ain't you glad she

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don't whack you, Nell? 'cause you couldn't run away and hide like me."

"No," shivered Nell; "come closer, Ray, I'm so cold."

"I can't come no closer," said Ray; "I'm hugging you now as tight as tight. What's the matter, Nell? do you feel bad?" But heavy sobs choked the child's utterance, and shook her from head to foot. "What's the matter, Nell?" said Ray, piteously. "O, don't cry! I'll give you both my two pennies. I can't bide to hear you cry. Are you crying 'cause you want a 'happy Christmas?'"

"I don't know," sobbed Nell, "I feel so strange. Oh, mother! mother!" But no mother came in answer to the cry. No mother's arms folded the quivering little form to a mother's loving heart. No gentle hand smoothed the brown curls from the damp forehead, or wiped away the tears from the flushed cheek! Poor little Nell!

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"Do you feel very bad, Nell? shall I get you a drink of water?" asked Ray, with tearful voice.

"No," moaned Nell, "I did want you to come back so bad, Ray; it was so dreadful, all alone in the dark; there were such strange noises, and I was so frightened."

"I'll never leave you so long again; I'll come home as soon as it is dark, Nell. Shall I get down and warm your feet, like I did last night? May-be you'll sleep then."

"Kiss me first, Ray." Ray leaned over and gave her two or three loving kisses, and then crept down, and, taking the two little icy feet in her arms, hugged them close.

"Good night, Ray," said Nellie, gently.

"Good night, Nellie; I'll give you both my two pennies," replied a sleepy little voice down in the depths.

Two o'clock struck, and the little sisters slept. One, with the tears still wet upon her cheek; the other, holding close the cold feet, which, despite all her loving

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care, seemed only to grow colder. The hours sped away, and the cold grey dawn appeared. London awoke once more to busy life. The bells were ringing merrily when Ray emerged from her "bed." "Mother" was still snoring heavily, and Ray turned to Nell; but she lay so still and white, that Ray was frightened. "Nell," she said, first softly, and then louder, but Nell never stirred. Ray turned a frightened, hopeless look at the senseless heap in the further corner, and ran out and fetched a neighbour.

The woman, good-natured when she was not drunk, came and bent over the silent, motionless little form. The rough, coarse hand stroked the thick hair gently from the white forehead, and her voice sounded strangely husky as she whispered, "Shure the purty darlint's gone!"

"Not dead! oh, not dead!" cried Ray. "Don't say she is dead!" But it was even so. The "something" little Ray had spoken about had happened; and

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Nellie's "happy Christmas" had dawned. Far from the haunts of sin and misery! Far above the sounds of drunken revelry, or brutal rage! Far away in the golden city, little Nellie was learning the meaning of "happy Christmas."

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Little Ray's New-Year.

LITTLE RAY stood again in the noisy, crowded streets. It was New-year's Eve, and Ray listlessly leaned against a lamp-post. There was no need to hurry home now, for there was no Nellie waiting for her. The drunken mother was now in prison. Whilst engaged in a street brawl she had been taken into custody, and almost dragged away, swearing and foaming in her senseless rage. Ray had stood among the crowd and

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with others watched the shameful scene; but the fact of its being her "mother" who had thus sunk to the lowest grade of female degradation never touched her, or roused that strange instinct of natural love which usually binds child to parent and parent to child. The thought uppermost was, "Where shall I sleep now?"

She returned at night to the desolate room, and slept in the old corner, where Nell had died; but early in the morning the woman came to whom the room belonged, and with foul language and threatening gestures drove her away, forbidding her ever to return. All day long the worse than "mitherless bairn" had wandered about, and night found her homeless and alone in the midst of our mighty city. Neither knowing nor caring where she was going, Ray found herself at last in a dull, quiet street.

How many miles she had wandered since morning Ray could not tell, but now she felt weary and forlorn. Some one had trodden upon her foot, too; and, though

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she was quite used to being trodden upon, yet somehow it seemed to hurt more than usual that night, and she sat down upon a door-step to try and rub the pain out of the poor little bruised foot.

Suddenly the soft strains of music fell upon her ear, and she lifted her head to listen. Someone in the house behind her struck a few chords, and then began to sing. The window was close to the road, and every word came out clear and distinct:

"Out in this cold world, out in the street,
Asking a penny of each one I meet,
Shoeless I wander about thro' the day,
Wearing my young life in sorrow away;
No one to help me, no one to bless,
No one to pity me, none to caress;
Fatherless, motherless, sadly I roam,
A child of misfortune, I'm driven from home."

Ray clasped her hands convulsively, the big tears welled up in the blue eyes, and then rolled down the dirty little face.

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Several other voices joined in the sweet, low chorus: a deep mellow bass and rich tenor. Ray sat entranced.

"No one to help me, no one to bless,
No one to pity me, none to caress;
Fatherless, motherless, sadly I roam,
Nursed by my poverty, driven from home."

The words went straight to the desolate little heart, and Ray dropped her head upon her hands. But she was not the only listener there; a tall, stalwart man, and his wife, were standing near, attracted by the sweet sounds. As the music ceased, a low sob fell upon their ear, and, turning, they saw the little figure crouched in the shadow of the doorway.

"What is the matter, dear?" asked a voice, so loving and gentle that Ray checked her sobs and looked up in mute astonishment. It was a face worth looking at, that she saw; so womanly, so motherly, that the child's heart went out to it at once. And there was something in the wistful, little upturned face that appealed

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strongly to the true woman's heart, and Mrs. Armitage soon drew from the child all there was to tell. A simple tale, simply told, of neglect and misery.

As the child ceased speaking, the sweet voice in the lighted room sang clearer than ever.

"O where shall I go, or what shall I do?
I've no one to tell me what course to pursue;
I'm weary and footsore, I'm hungry and weak,
I know not what shelter to-night I may seek!
The Friend of all friends, who rules earth and sea,
Will look with a pitying eye upon me:
I'll wander about till His messenger come,
To lead me to father, and mother, and Home!"

Mary Armitage laid her hand upon her husband's arm.

"Robert, it is one of the Saviour's little ones! Surely we are the messengers!"

Robert Armitage smiled on the earnest face, and, stooping, took Ray's icy little hand, and said, "Will you come home with us, dear, and have a good supper and a warm bed?"

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Ray's face flushed with delight, and that was quite sufficient answer. Quietly she ran along by the side of her new friends till they reached home; but the light and warmth overcame her, and she fell fast asleep in the warm bath which was waiting her by the time she had finished her supper. She knew nothing of the pretty white bed in which she was gently laid; nothing of the loving kiss which accompanied the whispered, "May God bless you, my darling." Never mind, sleep on, little Ray, there are plenty of kisses in store for you now.

Morning came at last, and Ray awoke. A very different awakening this from the last we saw. For a few moments she looked round in puzzled surprise; but soon the last evening's occurrences came to her memory, and, after looking curiously at the warm blankets and white curtains, she jumped out of bed to make a voyage of discovery round the room.

Suddenly she stopped, and, clasping her hands tightly,

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uttered an exclamation of astonishment and delight. Right in front of her stood a little white-robed figure, with a wealth of sunny curls and wide-open blue eyes, the cheeks just tinged with pink, and two rows of tiny teeth showing between the parted lips. Ray gazed in silence, then mechanically raised her hand and touched her curly head. The little figure did the same. Ray nodded, and the little figure nodded back. "Why, it's me! it's me!" cried Ray, in a perfect ecstasy of surprise and joy. For the first time in her life she saw herself as she really was. But she was not long left in undisturbed admiration of her own little self. The sound of footsteps outside made her jump into bed again, and Mrs. Armitage found her nestling among the blankets, with only the curls and eyes visible.

Oh, that pile of little garments which Mrs. Armitage laid on the bed! Ray had never seen such strange things before; and, when she found they were for her,

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and one by one they were put on, she grew silent and still with intense pleasure.

After brushing out the shining curls, and tying them back with a blue ribbon, Mrs. Armitage led her before the glass. There stood a little girl very much like the one Ray had seen before, but now completely dressed, in a blue frock and a pretty roundabout pinafore with a braided frill and band. Even the two little bare feet were encased in white socks and string shoes.

"It isn't me! it isn't me!" said Ray, half crying, half laughing.

Mrs. Armitage laughed.

"Well, come downstairs, and perhaps we shall find out who it is after breakfast."

Ray held her hand tightly as they went downstairs and into the breakfast-room. Mr. Armitage laid down his paper, as his wife said merrily,

"Robert, here is a little girl who does not know herself."

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He took Ray's hand in his, and surveyed her from head to foot; then drawing her closely to him, said, "Well, I think it is a very dear little girl, and I should like her to give me a kiss."

Ray looked up into the kindly brown eyes, and very readily gave the required kiss. Poor child! very little she knew about such tokens of love!

All that day Ray seemed to live in a dream—it was all so strange, so unreal. She followed Mrs. Armitage wherever she went; down into the kitchen, to see about supper, or up into the bedrooms. And Mrs. Armitage was even happier than Ray. All the love that had been pent-up since the death of her only child—a little daughter, just Ray's size—now seemed ready to expend itself upon the little homeless wanderer. At first the patter of childish footsteps on the stairs and in the passages awoke such tender recollections of the lost darling, that the hot tears almost blinded her, and the poor mother locked herself in her room to apply for

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comfort where she was never refused. But that passed away, and she only loved Ray the more for reminding her of little Effie.

Ray scarcely knew how that happy day went. She thought no one could possibly be happier than she was when Mr. Armitage brought home a large wax doll, beautifully dressed.

Just fancy, little girls! Ray had never held a doll in her arms before. No wonder her cup of joy was full. She fell asleep on the hearth-rug, in the dusk, with Dolly rolled up in a shawl by her side; and, as the firelight flickered and played on the flushed face and bright hair, Mrs. Armitage thought she had rarely seen a prettier picture.

After tea, Mr. Armitage drew the child to him, and, seating her on his knee, told her such wonderful tales that Ray was completely fascinated. But it began to get late for such little folks, and, opening the Bible, Mr. Armitage said to his wife, "We had better

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have prayer early, dear, and then it will be time for Ray to be off."

Ray stood transfixed with dismay. Not one word of Mr. Armitage's prayer did she hear. Time for Ray to be off! It could have only one meaning. She was to leave all the love, and warmth, and light, and go out into the cold world again! A big lump rose in her throat, and the great tears completely blinded her.

They rose from their knees, and Mrs. Armitage was stooping to sweep up the hearth, when Ray gasped out, "Am I to go, now? Must I take off my frock?"

Mr. and Mrs. Armitage looked round in amazement.

"You said I was to be off," sobbed Ray, "must I take off my things?"

Mr. Armitage drew her forward, and, folding his strong arms round the trembling little form, said gently, "Poor little birdie! did you think we were going to turn you out of the nest this cold night? No, indeed!

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you are our own dear little daughter now, and must be as happy as the day is long!"

Ray did not quite know whether to go on crying or to laugh, it seemed too good to be true; and, hiding her face on the shoulder so conveniently near, she both laughed and cried to her heart's content.

It was a very happy little girl that went to sleep in the white bed that night. And no less happy were those who had thus gladly taken to their hearts and home the little outcast. There is a glorious reward prepared for those who befriend the Saviour's little ones.

Little Ray's New-Year commenced very brightly, for she had found Father, and Mother, and Home!

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Ray's First Valentine.

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RAY WAS OBLIVIOUS OF THEM ALL.—*See p.* 30.

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Ray's First Valentine.

BRIGHT-LOOKING little girl, who stood looking out of the window on the Fourteenth of February, you would hardly recognise. It is little Ray; but how changed! The thin cheeks are now filling up, and rosy; and the happy blue eyes look as if tears were perfect strangers to them. The fire was blazing brightly in the room behind her; Dolly lay unheeded on the couch, and a set of miniature furniture was on the floor

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before a large doll's-house; but Ray was oblivious of them all. She had been out for a walk that morning, and a well-known face had crossed her path. It was Jim, the little crossing-sweeper who had been so kind to her in the wretched old days when she lived in the court; and somehow she could not help thinking that he would come and try to see her. It was getting dusk, when at last she saw a ragged figure creeping along in the shadow of the houses opposite. Three or four times it went slowly past, and then crossed over; and Ray saw that it was indeed Jim. Her heart beat fast with excitement. What was she to do? Often had she been forbidden to go to the front door, for Mr. and Mrs. Armitage feared lest any of their little daughter's old companions or acquaintances should attempt to hold any intercourse with her. But then, this was Jim, who had always been so kind to her; and Ray felt that she must speak to him. Her father and mother were out, and Jane was busy in the kitchen. It was the easiest

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thing in the world to open the front door and let him come into the passage, just for one minute, where no one could see him. So Ray ran out and unfastened the chain. But Jim was gone. She peeped up and down, but there was no Jim; and, very much disappointed, she returned to the parlour window. It got darker and darker, and Ray was at last tired of watching. Jim had gone away without trying to speak to her, and she thought it was very unkind of him. As she turned reluctantly from the window, a low whistle fell upon her ear—Jim's whistle! She knew it at once; and in a moment the chain was unfastened, and she stood at the open door.

"Come in, Jim," she whispered; and in he came, looking very cold and miserable and guilty. Ray closed the door, and they stood looking at each other in silence. The firelight shone brightly through the doorway upon them both, and Jim gazed admiringly upon his little quondam friend and companion.

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"My eye, Ray, ain't yer a swell!" he whispered, at last.

"Yes," replied Ray, complacently smoothing down her pinafore, and setting her feet closely together; "I've got lots of things. Mother gives them to me."

"Mother!" said Jim, curiously; "do you call her mother?"

"Yes; and him father. They're real good to me, Jim, and I gets plenty to eat now. Just you peep into the parlour; you musn't go in, they wouldn't like it. That's my doll, I'll fetch it out."

"Don't," replied the boy, catching hold of her, "I'm going now. I've brought yer a volontine." He put a brown-paper parcel in her hand as he spoke. "I've bought it honest, Ray. I saved pennies ever so long, at the crossing. You wear it next time yer goes out. I sees yer often, when yer don't know I'm near. I sees yer shadder on the blind sometimes, and sometimes I hears yer laugh. I spose yer too grand to shake hands with a poor cove now."

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The ready tears sprang to Ray's eyes. "I ain't, and it's very wicked of you to say so. I've wanted to see you ever so bad, but you never came."

Jim looked pleased. "Then yer haven't forgot me, Ray. I'm glad yer ain't at the old place; why, yer quite a lady now. I spose yer never gets whacked."

"No, indeed," said Ray, quickly; "they had a little girl of their own once, and now they say I'm their dear little girl, and I do love them so. Perhaps they'd let you come and see me sometimes, Jim, if you wasn't so dirty, and would promise never to steal, and tell lies. Do promise, Jim, and I'll tell them. They often talk to me about being good, and I'm trying. Mother has taught me to pray. Do you ever pray, Jim?"

"I don't know no prayers," said Jim; "they ain't much in my line. I couldn't be good if I tried ever so."

"Oh yes, you could," replied Ray, coaxingly; "do try, Jim; say you'll try."

"Well, I'll try a bit, if you wants me to," said the

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boy, reluctantly, "and I'll wash, but I can't get no more clothes. Open the door, I'm going now. They'd send for the police if they found me here. I've been inside a prison once, and I never wants to see another. Good night, Ray."

He darted off, and Ray fastened the door, and returned to the parlour to examine her valentine. It was a necklace of large blue beads, common enough, but in Ray's eyes a thing of beauty indeed, and in a few moments it was around her neck, and she was standing on a chair, to admire the effect in the glass. Presently she began to wonder what her father and mother would say, when they knew she had opened the door to Jim. "Don't tell them," whispered a voice within; "hide the necklace, and they will never know anything about it." Ray stood irresolute. Trickery and falsehood she had been used to in her old days; but the grateful little childish heart could not bear the thought of any deception towards those whom she had learned to love

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so; and she resolved to tell them all as soon as they came in.

It was late when they returned, but Ray had leave to stay up, and she ran eagerly forward to meet them. In a few minutes she was in possession of her accustomed seat on her father's knee. But the usually busy little tongue was so silent and still, that Mrs. Armitage detected at once that something was wrong, and her heart grew anxious and doubtful. She had watched the child carefully, since her introduction to their home; constantly fearing to find some of the results of her former evil training. But Ray was naturally fearless and brave, and had hitherto attempted no concealment of any childish delinquency, and her mother was hopeful that the lessons of truth and honour, which she was so earnestly striving to inculcate, were taking root. Now she sat watching the thoughtful little face with its unusually grave expression, and her heart sank, as in obedience to her father's smiling look at the clock, Ray

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rose to wish them good night. But she was inexpressibly relieved when the curly head still remained hid upon her shoulder, and the child whispered, "I want to tell you something, mother." Then it all came out, and Ray showed the necklace, and pleaded eloquently for Jim—poor, wicked Jim—who did not even know how to pray. Mr. and Mrs. Armitage could not be very angry with their little daughter for her disobedience, seeing that it was gratitude for past kindness which had influenced her, and she went to bed perfectly happy with the promise that something should be done for Jim. Days passed, but nothing more was seen or heard of him, and Mr. Armitage went to the court, to inquire among his old friends where he was to be found, but all in vain, and at last they almost gave up watching for him.

One evening Mr. Armitage came home unusually late, and in answer to his wife's questions, replied that he had been detained on business; but as soon as Ray had

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gone to bed, he took a paper from his pocket, and pointed to one of the paragraphs. It was merely the trial of a number of thieves, but among them was a boy, the description of whom corresponded exactly with the one given by Ray of Jim. He, too, was called Jim, and Mr. Armitage felt sure they were the same. "I have been down to the police station," he said, "making inquiries, and there is no doubt that it is the boy. You see the paper is an old one; I took it up apparently accidentally, and the name caught my eye. It is a common-enough name, too; and, as soon as I could, I went up to see about it. I did not mention it before Ray, I thought we would wait till we had decided what to do. We must try and get him into some institution or home. There is no time to lose, for his term of imprisonment is over next Wednesday, and it will never do to let him go back to his old comrades. They will be only too ready to receive him. I will see Norton to-morrow, and hear if there is any opening in the Home

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with which he is connected. If we get him in, we must take the little one to see him; she will be delighted."

The next day Mr. Armitage went to the Home, of which he had often heard, and requested an interview with the Principal, with whom he was slightly acquainted. He laid the case before him, and asked if it were possible for Jim to be received there. But, alas! the old story met his ear: want of funds.

"We are now living up to every penny of our income," said the Principal, "and it would be worse than folly to take another child when we can only just pay our way. Go into debt we dare not."

"No," replied Mr. Armitage, "that would never do. Well, I must try and get something else for my little friend. But you will remember him if your funds are increased, and you can make room for him?"

"Certainly. It is an urgent case, though not more so than many we hear of every day. I need not tell you how gladly we would receive them all, if it were

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possible. My heart aches over these lost little ones, and we are making every effort to enlarge our borders. I will let you know when we have an opening. I know you will do all you can for the poor boy in the meantime, Mr. Armitage."

Mr. Armitage walked slowly away, thinking wonderingly how few in the mighty city ever thought of the crowds of little arabs who were constantly passing before them. Living in careless enjoyment of every luxury, surrounded by every comfort, knowing nothing of the pinchings of want, the struggles for existence, the despair of starvation, which are the daily experiences of multitudes around.

One of Ray's occupations was to watch for the morning postman, and take the letters to her father. About two days after his visit to the Home, a letter came from the Principal, asking him to call, as it was now in his power to receive the boy. Ray little knew, as she danced into the room with the letter, how its contents

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affected her old companion; and her face was a picture as her father read it aloud to her. Enclosed was another letter, which accounted for the Principal's present ability to receive Jim. It was from a gentleman in the country, saying how anxious his boys and girls had been to do something for the homeless and friendless children of London, and how they had been working for months, making all sorts of pretty and useful things, and, when they had enough to make a good show, had sent out circulars inviting people to come and buy. The result of the sale, together with subscriptions from friends, amounted to sixteen pounds, which they sent to the Home, for the maintenance of the most needy child the Principal knew.

Ray fairly danced with delight. "O, those dear good little children who worked for Jim," she cried; "I do love them! I wish I knew their names. Don't you wish you could see them, mother, and tell them how glad we are?"

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"We can tell them that without seeing them, dear," replied her mother; "we will write and tell them."

And so she did, and thanked them in Ray's name for their labour of love. That letter was wonderfully prized by the children at the farm, and they kept it as one of their greatest treasures; for it reminded them of one who had once been neglected and starved, but was now, through their endeavours, cared for and loved.

On Wednesday morning Jim went from a prison to a happy home, where for the first time in his life he found himself an object of care and kindness. Ray scarcely knew him in his new home. Hand in hand they went from room to room, and he showed her his books, and told her his plans for the future. Funny plans they were, too, some of them. It was rather hard work for him to give up his erratic habits and settle steadily to work; but he had many to help him, and plenty of fun and play with the work, so he resolved to do his best to become an industrious, honest lad.

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The Children's Bazaar.

THE children of the Home Farm were assembled in solemn conclave in the schoolroom. Some matter of great importance was under discussion.

Stephen, a tall boy of fifteen, was chairman of the meeting. Sensible, practical Margaret, his junior by one year, came next. Then the fair-haired twins, aged twelve, Clarice and Clifford, the inseparables. Mischievous, fun-loving Lionel, sat astride the arm of the sofa, while the six-year-old Daisy sat with folded hands

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on a hassock just in front of the chair of state, evidently much impressed with a sense of the importance and solemnity of the occasion.

"The matter under discussion," said the chairman," rising with dignity, "is the best means of obtaining money for the poor little street-children of London. Several suggestions have been made, but that of a bazaar seems to be the most favourable. I beg to propose that a bazaar be held in the early part of next year for the aforesaid purpose."

"I beg to second that proposition," said Margaret, in a business-like way.

"I beg to third that poposition," said Daisy, with great gravity.

"You silly little thing, be quiet," cried Lionel; "they never third popositions."

"All in favour of this proposal will show it in the usual manner, by holding up their hands," continued the chairman.

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Every hand was raised, and the motion was declared carried unanimously.

"We ought to have a secretary, to keep our accounts," said Margaret. "I propose Mr. Clifford Macpherson."

"I second it," shouted Lionel.

"All right; I'll do my best," replied Clifford, in anything but a dignified manner.

"The assembled committee will signify their consent to the following resolutions, by holding up their hands," read the chairman.

"First: Each member of the committee is to place in the hands of the secretary such sum of money as he or she can spare, for the purpose of buying material for work."

Unanimous show of hands.

"Secondly: All lessons are to be learned before tea, thereby leaving the evening free for work."

General assent.

"Thirdly: A weekly record be kept by each member

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of the work done, and contributions received by them during the week."

Carried.

"Fourthly: The members of the committee are to work with heart and hand, and ever bear in mind the interests of the bazaar."

"Hear, hear," and loud applause.

"That is all," said the chairman; "if any member wishes to suggest anything, he is at liberty to speak."

"Or for ever afterwards hold his peace," interrupted Lionel.

"Ought we not to have a deputation to wait upon our friends, and ask them to help?" asked Margaret.

"Me and Daisy," shouted Lionel. "we'll beg like Britons."

"Clarice and Clifford," said Stephen; "they will do best."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Clarice. "You go, Margaret; I can't beg."

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"No rebellion," said the chairman, authoritatively. "If the meeting is in favour of the appointment, you must submit."

The meeting was in favour, so Clarice and Clifford were declared deputation.

"I propose," said Clarice, "that we ask mamma to come here, where we can have her all to ourselves, and ask her opinion and advice."

"Hear, hear," cried the committee; and Daisy was dispatched to the parlour, with a request that Mrs. Macpherson would favour the committee of management with her presence in the assembly-room. Daisy went down, repeating her message aloud all the way, and soon returned with Mrs. Macpherson, whom the chairman led to the big and easy-chair with great state.

Clifford, who was to be general spokesman, then informed her of their purpose, and read aloud the minutes of the meeting.

"It is a capital plan," said Mrs. Macpherson; "I

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will do all I can to help you. When do you intend to commence operations?"

"On Monday," replied Margaret; "we have no time to lose. But we have no money yet. Here is my first contribution, Mr. Secretary."

"Five shillings!" said Clarice; "I've only got four, Margaret."

"I have six," said Clifford, quietly.

"Why, Cliff, how did you manage to keep so much?" exclaimed Stephen; "I've spent all my pocket money, except two shillings. But I will begin to save now."

"Must we give *all* we've got?" asked Lionel. "I've only got tenpence."

There was a general laugh at the low state of Lionel's finances.

"How much has Daisy got?" asked Mrs. Macpherson, lifting the little girl on her lap, money-box and all.

"One, two, free shillings—I'll give them all, mamma!"

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And Daisy emptied her treasure into her mother's hand, with a great sigh of contentment.

"I wish I had got three shillings—I'd give them all, too," said Lionel, stirred to emulation by his little sister's generosity.

"One pound and tenpence," read the secretary, who had been adding up the subscriptions. "That's capital for a beginning. Mamma, you and papa will give us something, won't you?"

Mrs. Macpherson took out her purse, and laid half-a-sovereign in Clifford's hand. "Will that do? You must ask your papa after tea."

"Oh, thank you, mamma," exclaimed the committee.

"Hurrah!" shouted Lionel. "If papa gives us as much, sha'n't we have a jolly lot!"

"Well," said mamma, rising, "I think we had better go to tea now, and discuss it afterward."

Stephen sprang forward, offering his mother his arm; and they all trooped downstairs.

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"Well," said Mr. Macpherson, "what new scheme have you children on hand now? I can see there is something in the wind."

"Let me tell papa," pleaded Daisy; and, taking possession of her father's knee, she gave a somewhat complicated and unintelligible account of their project.

"You will give us something, won't you, papa?" demanded Lionel. "We've all given something."

"I should like to know what sum Master Lionel has contributed to the fund," said Mr. Macpherson, smiling.

"Oh," replied Lionel, evasively, "I gave a lot. I'm going to save up now, so is Stephen."

"You won't save much, Lion; you'll want to buy sweets," cried Daisy.

"You shut up," retorted polite Lionel; "I don't care a bit for sweets, 'cept toffy, and that isn't sweets. You do—you're only a picaninny."

Lionel had heard the word "picaninny" at a mis-

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sionary meeting, and, not having the slightest idea of its meaning, had used it ever since as a term of great contempt.

"Am I a 'picaninny,' papa?" said Daisy, appealingly.

"Yes," replied her father, "you are my little 'picaninny.'"

Lionel contemplated the fire in silence for a few moments. If Daisy were papa's 'picaninny,' it must mean something very nice—something, too, he would like to be.

"Am I one too?" he asked. But Mr. Macpherson only looked very grave, and repeated, "Daisy is my little 'picaninny'"; so Lionel concluded that it was something very nice, and that he had been paying Daisy a great compliment—a consciousness which made the young gentleman feel rather put down for about the space of two minutes.

"Will you help us, papa?" asked Clarice, anxiously.

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"What do you want me to do?" replied Mr. Macpherson; "put on a thimble, and sew gussets and seams?"

"Papa's making fun of us," cried Daisy. "Men and boys don't sew; they can't."

"We will do the sewing, papa, if you will help to buy the material," said Margaret.

"Oh, that is it, is it? you are meditating a raid on my purse. Dear me! the troubles and trials of having a lot of children! Well, I will give you the same that Lionel has; will that do?"

There was a general exclamation of "Oh, papa!"

"Is it too much?" asked Mr. Macpherson, in mock surprise.

"I only gave tenpence," said Lionel, sturdily. "Mamma gave ten shillings: you must give the same."

"If I must, I must," replied his father, resignedly taking out his purse. "There you are."

"Oh, thank you, papa," cried the committee, like a

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Greek chorus, while Daisy hugged and kissed him in a transport of gratitude.

"I suppose you have made all the arrangements," said Mr. Macpherson, when they were seated round the tea-table. "Where is the bazaar to be held?"

"We have not decided yet," replied the secretary. "Do you think the new barn would be a good place, papa?"

"Not very; it is too far out of town. I can get you the magistrates' room, if you like."

"The very thing," said Stephen; "it is a splendid room; not so large as the barn, and in a capital central position. All right, papa, we'll have it. There is no need to put that to the meeting."

"Yes, you ought, Stephen," said Daisy. "I like to hold up my hand."

So Stephen put it to the vote; and Daisy held up her hands so high, that Lionel, unable to resist the temptation, gave her the least little bit of a tickle,

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which made her bring them down again so quickly that all her tea was upset, and she had to go upstairs to change her pinafore.

"What sort of things ought we to make, mamma?" asked Margaret. "Useful things, such as aprons, pinafores, cuffs?"

"Cricket-caps," suggested Stephen. "I want a new one, blue and white."

"I'll make a mouse-trap," suddenly exclaimed irrepressible Lionel.

"And put a sugar mouse in—do, Lion," cried Daisy; "I'll buy it. I like sugar mouses."

"A sugar mouse, indeed!" retorted Lionel, indignantly; "my mouse-traps are to catch real live mouses —mice, I mean."

"Oh, don't, Lion," said tender-hearted Daisy, pitifully. "Poor little mouses! don't catch them, Lion; they are so pretty."

"Pooh!" said Lionel, contemptuously; "girls always

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talk like that. I wouldn't mind killing an elephant, or a—a—"

"Cat," suggested Daisy, seeing that Lionel was somewhat at a loss.

"Yes," said Lionel, "I'd like to shoot our old black cat."

Daisy looked horrified.

"Papa," said Clifford, "don't you think it will be a good plan to write some circulars asking for contributions, like they did at Olney?"

"Yes," replied the father; "fetch some paper, and I will help you to draw one up. Have we all finished, mamma?"

Mr. Macpherson returned thanks, and Clifford went for his desk. Stephen and the girls got their work; Mrs. Macpherson commenced knitting a pair of crimson cuffs; and Miss Neil, the governess, began winding cotton for an elaborate antimacassar. Even Daisy found her crochet-hook, and began a cheese-cloth,

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which required to be looked at every minute-and-a-half.

After trying several things, Lionel settled down on the rug, to make tails for Stephen's kites. The evening passed rapidly away. Strange to say, no one got tired of work. Indeed, the supper-bell was heard with regret by some members of the committee, as being the signal for suspending operations till the following Monday.

There were no more idle hours at the Farm; every spare moment was seized for work. Lionel took out the circulars, and did a little begging at the same time. But he and Daisy were wofully disappointed as the week passed and no contributions came in. They had expected a regular harvest of pretty things as soon as it was known that they were going to have a bazaar. At last they concocted a scheme, which was to be kept a profound secret till the result was known. It was evident to all that the little ones had a secret, there were such mysterious consultations, and significant

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signs, and looks; but all endeavours to coax it out of them were vain. It was not long before an opportunity presented itself for putting their project into execution. It was a fine, bright day; and Miss Neil was suffering from a severe headache, which prevented her from taking the children for their walk.

"It is nice and dry in the lane, mamma," said Clarice; "couldn't they take their hoops there?"

Lionel pricked up his ears at the suggestion.

"They will be all right there, I should think," replied Mrs. Macpherson. "Mind you take care of Daisy, Lion."

Lionel made all sorts of promises, and off they ran. As soon as they were out of sight of the house, Lionel seized his sister's hand, and said, excitedly, "Now, Daisy, run as fast as you can."

And away they went, full speed, down the hill, into the town. They stopped before a large fancy and toy shop, and Lionel pulled an envelope out of his pocket, and looked to see if it were all right.

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"You give it, Daisy," he said, thrusting it into her hand. And, gathering up their courage, they marched into the shop.

A white-haired old man stood behind the counter—Mr. West himself. Daisy walked boldly up, and presented the letter. He put on his spectacles, and looked curiously at it, and then at them.

"Hem—Mr. Macpherson's little boy and girl. Did your father send it, my dears?"

"Please read it," replied Daisy, shyly. And he read.

"A bazaar, is it?" he asked, doubtfully.

Lionel's spelling and composition were unique, to say nothing of the writing. By that time Master Lionel had found his tongue, and volunteered an explanation.

"And so you want me to give you some of my pretty things, do you? What made you come to me?"

Lionel was struck dumb again; but Daisy answered bravely, "We thought you would like to be kind, and help the poor little orphan children."

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Mr. West laughed. "A very good thought of yours, little Miss Daisy. I suppose I must not disappoint you. I will look out some things, and send them up."

Lionel scarcely waited to get out of the shop, before throwing up his cap, and shouting "Hurrah!"

The rest of that day they were in a perpetual state of excitement. Every ring made them start from their seats, and all were wondering what in the world was the matter with the children. About seven o'clock the servant brought in a parcel, directed to Daisy; and then the secret came out. Lionel danced round the room in an ecstasy of delight as he recounted their adventure, and no one had the heart to scold them. Mrs. Macpherson, however, told Lionel he was never to take Daisy into the town again.

"Suppose she had been run over," she said.

Master Lionel opened his eyes wide. "What! when I was with her, mamma?"

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"Yes, even when you were with her, most valiant knight!" replied his mother, laughing.

Lionel looked quite insulted.

The Christmas holidays gave plenty of time for work. The hardworking committee ransacked their brains for new and original ideas. Clarice declared that she dreamed of boxes and bags; and sometimes her dreams gave her inspiration, and some wonderfully pretty little things were the result. Margaret said that she tried to dream, but nothing ever came of it.

"Eat a lot of cheese and pickled onions for supper," suggested Stephen; "then you will dream."

"I never dream," said Lionel, contemplatively. "Oh, yes, I did the other night—I just remember. I dreamt Daisy was a little mouse in a trap, and she squeaked ever so."

"Did you let me out?" asked Daisy, her eyes wide open with interest.

"I 'spect I did," replied Lionel, doubtfully. "I think

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I woke then. I wouldn't let you out now, Daisy, if you were in a trap; not if you squeaked and squeaked."

"I don't care," said Daisy, defiantly; "I'm not a mouse."

It would take too much time to enumerate half the pretty things which the clever little fingers at the Farm made. Clifford's and Clarice's fanciful things were the wonder and admiration of the whole house. Margaret excelled in plain work; and Stephen made ships, and kites, and whips; flower-stands of Virginian cork, too, which he filled with ferns or flowers, and tended carefully every day, hoping to have them in full beauty at the bazaar.

Lionel's contributions were numerous and unique—little boxes, full of rusty nails, which he considered perfect marvels of cheapness at a penny each; gaudy pictures, painted by himself, and framed with oak apples or coloured paper.

"Lion must have a stall to himself," said Mr. Mac-

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pherson, jokingly; "everybody will want to buy his things."

"I've sold something already," cried Lionel, triumphantly; "Willie Lee bought a picture, only he didn't pay for it."

"How much was it?" asked Daisy.

"It ought to have been sixpence by rights; but he said he would only give twopence, so I let him have it. I've got lots more."

Lionel evidently thought he had performed a most generous action.

At the end of January, a meeting was called for the purpose of fixing a day for the sale; and, after some discussion, the twelfth of the next month was thought to be the most convenient.

"People will come to buy things for valentines," said Margaret. And that settled the point.

As the day drew near, the children were constantly on the *qui vive*. "Something was always happening,"

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Lionel said. In the first place, the long-expected contributions began to appear. People who had hitherto taken no interest in the bazaar suddenly discovered that it was worthy their help. Little girls who had been quietly working, brought lengths of crochet and tatting. One dear little lame boy walked all the way to the Farm, to take the pretty pen-wipers which he himself had made.

Then circulars and bills had to be sent round the town, and the deputation had to wait upon their numerous friends and acquaintances, to give them due notice and solicit their help. One friend promised to lend his piano for the evening, and a florist willingly lent a number of beautiful plants with which to decorate the stalls.

At last the eventful day arrived. The room had been decorated, and the stalls set out the evening before, but the children went down directly after breakfast, to see if daylight could suggest any alterations. Daisy was

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anxious that all "her things," as she called Mr. West's gifts, should occupy prominent positions, and Lionel was indignant to find some of his productions quite in the background.

The bills announced that the doors would be open at three in the afternoon; but before that time people began to arrive, and in a short time the room was nearly full.

Margaret was in her element; but shy Clarice did not at all like the office of saleswoman, and was always willing to give up a customer to any of the friends who had volunteered to help. Stephen took possession of the weighing-machine, and was most pressing in his attentions to the stout old ladies, setting forth in eloquent, though somewhat defective argument, the great benefit to be derived from a knowledge of one's own weight.

"Stephen, how can you be so absurd?" laughed Clarice, after listening to one of his orations.

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"Hush!" whispered Stephen, "it's all for the good of the cause; besides, they like it." And so they did like it indeed. The merry, handsome boy was a general favourite.

As the evening wore on, the stalls began to look bare; the articles sold rapidly. Daisy and Lionel were very busy taking things round the room, and asking everyone to buy. Nine o'clock came, and Mrs. Macpherson looked vainly round the room for her little daughter. Nobody knew anything about her; not even Lionel. "I 'spect she's gone to sleep somewhere," he said; "I'll look." He soon found her. Poor, little, tired Daisy! there she lay, fast asleep on a heap of rugs and wraps, under one of the stalls. Her father lifted her gently up, and carried her home. She did not awake even when she was laid in her cot. Lionel could scarcely keep his eyes open, but nothing could induce him to go to bed till his father and Stephen had finished counting the money.

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"There!" cried Stephen, at last, "after paying all expenses we shall have just sixteen pounds—the very sum we want!"

"Hurrah!" cried Lionel, wide awake now; "isn't it awfully jolly!"

Everybody laughed, but at the same time quite agreed with Lionel.

The next day a committee meeting was called, and the important question discussed whether a little girl or boy should be selected to enter the Home for destitute children, where the money was to be sent. Mr. and Mrs. Macpherson and Miss Neil were invited to attend, and a warm and animated discussion took place. Mr. Macpherson, however, settled the matter by suggesting that a little boy might, if he turned out well, be employed on the Farm. This decided every one except Daisy, who lamented that she could not send a boy any of her dolls. But she was comforted when Miss Neil promised to teach her how to make pretty scarlet cuffs,

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which would keep the little boy's wrists nice and warm during the cold weather.

After that, our boy—"our boy," as the children called him, was a constant subject of conversation at the Farm, and the postman was never so eagerly watched for before. At last, the looked-for letter arrived, and little Jim's history was read aloud by the secretary to a deeply-interested and most attentive audience. The letter was accompanied by a *carte* of a ragged, forlorn-looking little fellow, whose wretched appearance showed unmistakably how much he needed the generous help and kindness his unknown little friends were ready to bestow.

A few days afterwards came the letter from Mrs. Armitage, and then the sympathy was pretty equally divided between "our boy" and little Ray. Daisy insisted upon making two pairs of cuffs, one scarlet and the other blue; Ray was to have her choice, because she was a "little girl." One day Mr. Macpherson drove

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to the station, accompanied by Lionel and Daisy, who were most anxious to see for themselves that two parcels were safely dispatched to London. One was directed to Jim, the other to Miss Rachel Armitage. There is no need for me to enumerate the contents of those parcels, nor to attempt any description of their reception. I must leave that to your imagination; but I think everybody will agree with me, that the "Children's Bazaar" was a perfect success.

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Ray's Letter, and Jim's Escape.

IM was sitting, silent and sulky, in a corner of the schoolroom. He was alone: all the rest of the boys were at play outside. He could hear their merry voices as they shouted or called to each other, and he felt very lonely.

"I won't stand it!" he said to himself, angrily; "I'll cut and run, see if I don't! Catch me a-stopping to be jawed at like that!" And he swung his feet angrily up and down, as he sat on a corner of the bench.

"I never did nothink, 'cept have a bit of a lark—and

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what's that? Can't a cove have a bit of a lark now and then? It's precious seldom we gets anythink of the sort. And then they makes me stay here!—hugh!"

It is impossible to describe this last exclamation, but it was expressive of the utmost disgust and contempt; and Jim swung his feet more vigorously than ever.

Presently the door opened, and one of the masters came in.

"Jim," he said, quietly, "Come here."

Jim looked defiantly at him, but did not move.

"Do you hear me, Jim?"

No answer.

After waiting a few minutes, the master walked across, and sat opposite the boy.

"If you won't come to me, I must come to you," he said, coolly. "How long are you going on like this, Jim?"

"Jest as long as I likes."

"Or—as long as we let you, eh?"

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"You can't help it."

"What made you disobey me in school this afternoon?"

"I ain't going to mind anybody."

"What do you suppose this Home is for?" asked the master, after a pause.

"Don't know, and don't care."

"Yes, you do know. You are not going to tell me a lie, like that, are you?"

Jim's tender point was touched, for he prided himself upon his truthfulness.

"It's to make prigs of street-boys," he said, sulkily.

"That isn't true, and you know it. We don't want to make prigs of anyone. Answer my question."

"Well, it's to shut us up, and not let us have no larks," said Jim, in an injured tone.

"Do you call it 'a lark' to give me as much trouble as you can? That is queer 'larking,' Jim! If I were you, I would 'lark' without injuring others. But I

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have something to tell you, and something to give you. Will you listen?"

"What have you got to give me?"

"That you shall know afterwards: listen to what I have to tell you. There was once a boy, about your age, a street-boy. He had no home, no parents, no friends. You know how you used to get your living before you came here."

"Yes," said Jim, still sulkily.

"Well, that was how this boy got his living. Sometimes he begged, sometimes he stole; and at last he was caught and sent to prison. There he had to work hard—much harder than you do here. Isn't that true?"

"Yes; they makes us work," said Jim, reluctantly.

"When he came out of prison he went on just the same, and was caught again and sent back. And this happened over and over again until he was a man. He had no home of his own: he lodged here and there,

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with thieves and drunkards, and was as bad as any of them. Then, in a drunken fit, he half-murdered a man, and was sent to prison for seven years with hard labour. When he came out, he was hardened; and before six months had passed he was in prison again—this time for ten years. Before these were over he died."

"Well," said Jim; "what of it? Lots of coves have done that."

"Now listen to something else. There was another boy, just as bad as that one. He had been in prison, and in all probability would soon have gone again. But one day he was taken to a Home like this. There he was taught to read, and he read books full of interesting stories. He was also taught a trade, and had plenty of good food and clothes. Is that true?"

"Yes," muttered Jim, "that's true; but they don't let us have no larks."

"He had plenty of time for playing; and had tops, and bats and balls, to play with. Is that true?"

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"Yes; least-ways it is in this Home."

"Well, this other Home was the same. They taught him to be honest, so that people might trust him; and, when he was old enough, they put him out as an apprentice. Here he stayed some years; and then, with the help of the same friends, set up in business for himself. He was honest, and so people trusted him; and he got on, and soon had a comfortable home of his own. As for 'larks,' while the other one was picking oakum in prison, he was eating good dinners of his own earning, and taking trips to the country or the sea-side with his wife and children. Weren't those the sort of 'larks' you'd like? or would you rather pick oakum in prison?"

A smile began to appear on Jim's face. "In course, I'd rather have the jolly dinners and trips," he said; "but I don't like settin' still."

This was what the trouble was about. Jim would not sit still during school hours: he always wanted to

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be doing something, and, the moment the master's eyes were turned, he was on his head, walking between the forms, or turning somersaults, for the edification of the school. It was of no use correcting or punishing him: he seemed incorrigible.

"You had to sit still in prison," said the master. "Suppose you were in prison now."

"I'd like to go about in the streets," muttered Jim, turning obstinate, as he thought of his old freedom.

"Would you like to leave the Home and go back to the old ways—the hunger, and dirt, and cold?"

"No," said Jim, candidly; "I'd like, though, to go out and come in when I likes, and not to set still all day."

"You have only to sit still during school hours. Come, Jim, don't be foolish: you have plenty of sense, if you will only use it. Say you will keep the rules for the future, and be obedient."

But it was of no use. Jim was sulky again; and at last the master went away.

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Jim watched him out of sight; and then went to one of the windows, and opened it.

"It ain't very far," he thought, looking down. "If 'twas dark, I'd be out in a jiffy. I'll go! I won't stay here no longer, though he did get dinners and trips! He was a prig—I know he was!" And Jim made a grimace of contempt: he hated prigs.

As he looked out of the window, he heard footsteps, and had only time to jump down, when the master came in and put something on the desk.

"I forgot to give you your letter," he said, and went out again—not, however, without noticing the open window

Jim seized the letter. It was not the first he had had, and he knew where it came from.

"My dear Jim," it began, in funny round letters; "I am going to write you a letter. How are you? Are you a good boy? Can you write? Mother has told me how to spell. She is so kind, and I do love her and

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father. I have got a new frock, and I have got a cap for you. I am coming to see you next week. I do love you, Jim. I wish you lived here. Are you trying to be good? I am trying to be good. I do want to see you. I know you are good. I must stop now: it is tea-time. Good-bye! Don't forget to be good.—Your affectionate little friend, RAY."

Jim read this funny little letter from beginning to end, and then put it in his pocket.

"If I runs away, I shan't see her," he thought, remorsefully. But he had made up his mind to run away, and thought it cowardly to draw back.

All that evening he was making a plan of escape. When the boys were out in the play-ground before going to bed, he would steal back into the schoolroom, and jump out of the window. It opened into a yard from which he could easily escape; and it would be dusk, so no one would see him.

Having made all his arrangements, he opened his

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books, and pretended to learn his lessons. He did not really learn them, because he thought he should not be there to say them, so what was the use?

At last the books were shut and put away, and all the boys raced into the play-ground. Jim went with them, and for a time was the noisiest of the noisy. But it was all put on, to prevent suspicions being aroused: he did not really enjoy the games one bit.

The master, passing through the play-ground, called him to him.

"Well, Jim, what does little Ray say?" he asked.

"Says she's coming to see me," replied Jim, bluntly.

"Is she happy in her new home?"

"Jest about! they're real good to her."

"I wonder what report I shall have to give her about you, when she comes—good or bad."

Jim was silent.

"You wouldn't like her to come in now, and hear all

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you have done this week—would you, Jim? I think she'd be very sorry to hear it."

"I don't care," Jim muttered to himself.

But he did care, in his heart, very much.

At last the time he had fixed upon came, and he stole into the deserted schoolroom. It was quite dusk; and he felt his way carefully over forms and desks, till he came to the window. It was fastened, and, as he unfastened it, it made such a noise that his heart began to beat fast with fright. Suppose he were found out, and punished!

But no one came, and, after listening a few minutes, he opened the window very softly, and dropped out into the yard below. Now he had only to run; for the coast was clear, and there was no one to stop him. In a short time he was in the crowded streets, and, after relieving his mind with a few somersaults, he hurried on, to try and find his old companions. As he turned down the alley, he met a woman, carrying a large

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basket: it was the mother of an old pal, and he stopped her to ask for Ben. For a moment she did not recognise him, and then could scarcely believe her own eyes.

"Well, I should never ha' knowed yer," she said; "yer ain't the same lad. I guess yer ain't known what it is to want wittals lately, Jim."

"I've had plenty to eat," said Jim; finding, to his surprise, that he was evidently thought a lucky boy. "Where's Ben?"

"Where you'll be afore long if yer comes here," was the rough reply. "He's bin in prison for six weeks."

"When's he coming out?"

"Not for a fortnight. Have yer run away from yer fine Home? Did they bate yer?"

"They never beat me," said Jim, indignantly; "they don't beat the boys."

"Well, what ha' yer come away for, then? I only wish they'd took my Ben." And, grumbling to herself, she went on, leaving Jim alone. He ran about for a

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few hours, enjoying the freedom, and looking for old friends. But he had been away nearly six months, and those he found didn't seem the same: he did not care much for them, after all. That night he spent out-of-doors for the first time for months; and it wasn't nice. When he got up the next morning, he was cold and stiff and hungry.

Then all the boys jeered him for running away; and altogether he found life in the streets very different from what he had fancied it. There was no breakfast for him: he had to go hungry till he could earn or pick up something. Somehow, he couldn't eat the things he used to—bits of vegetables thrown into the gutters, and rotten or unripe fruit. He had been used to bread-and-butter, and nice hot coffee or milk-and-water. It was a come-down in the world, to pick dirty crusts out of the mud.

As the day passed, he grew more and more disgusted; but, though his common sense told him to go

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back to the Home, his pride wouldn't let him. When it got dark, he went to try and catch a glimpse of Ray.

It was a warm evening, and, though the blind was down, the window was open, and he could distinctly hear Ray's voice as she chattered to her mother. Getting as close as ever he could, he tried to hear what she was saying: he wanted to know if they had been told he had run away. Presently Ray came close to the window, still talking.

"Won't Jim like his cap, mother? I do wish next week would come fast: I do want to see him! I think Jim is a dear, good boy—don't you, mother?"

"I believe he is trying hard to be a good boy."

"I wonder if he's got my letter: do you think he has?"

"He had it last night, I expect."

"I wonder if he could read it: I wrote it all myself—didn't I?" went on Ray, whose little tongue was rarely

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still. "Ar'n't you glad he's in that nice Home instead of running about the streets? May I take my kitten to show him?"

"I don't think you'd better: it will be so much trouble. Can you shut down that window? it is getting cold."

Then Ray came to the window and shut it down with a bang. Jim crouched close to the wall: he wouldn't have her know he had run away, for all the world! what would she say? He knew, though he dared not look up, that her bright little face was pressed close against the pane, and she was looking out: then he heard her say—

"If Jim's a good boy and I'm a good boy too—I mean, a good girl—I may have him here to tea, mayn't I, mother?"

He couldn't hear Mrs. Armitage's answer, but he knew it was "Yes"; and he crept away, feeling very downcast and miserable.

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"No one loves me," he thought: "only Ray, and she don't very much—least-ways she won't when she knows I've runned away." And he sat on a door-step, and began kicking his heels against it, as he had a habit of doing when he was cross.

"Go back to the Home," said his Good Spirit; but, unfortunately, there was a Bad Spirit saying, "I wouldn't go back to the Home!—stay out in the streets and be a man."

"I shall have to steal," said Jim to this evil counsellor, "and then I shall go to prison."

"But you'll come out again."

"Yes, and go in again," said Jim, crossly. "What's a cove to do? he can't starve—he must steal."

"Go back to the Home, then," urged his better self; "you are safe there."

"They'll punish me," muttered Jim.

"That's better than the police punishing you. Go back before they've told Ray."

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This was a great temptation to Jim, and he rose to his feet.

"She'd be awful sorry if she knowed," he said, repentantly. "I 'most wish I hadn't done it. And she's coming to see me, and bring me a cap, too."

He went a few steps down the street, when suddenly he stopped in dismay. There, on the other side, was his master, talking to some man.

"He's going to tell Ray!" he exclaimed.

"If he does, I'll never go back."

"Then run quick and catch him, and ask him not to tell her," said the voice within; "run, Jim!"

And Jim ran, and overtook the master near Ray's door. He was still talking to the man, and they stopped under a lamp-post. Jim hid in a doorway and waited, his heart beating fast.

"I'll go back if he won't tell Ray," he muttered to himself; "she'd be so awful sorry."

Saying this over and over again, he waited till the

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two separated; and then, not waiting for his courage to fail, he ran after the master, and touched his arm just as he put his foot on Ray's door-step.

"Please sir, don't tell her! I won't run away again," he said.

The master turned in astonishment. "Jim, you here!"

"Please, sir, I'll go back, and never run away again, if you won't tell Ray," said Jim, his voice trembling with eagerness.

"Very well," said the master, quietly; "we will go home."

He turned round, and, as they walked home, he questioned Jim, and heard all about it.

"And so you think you had better come home to those who are your real friends—do you, Jim?" he said. "Well, my boy, suppose you begin again to-night, and see how happy you can be, instead of trying to make yourself and others miserable; will you?"

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"Yes," said Jim; "I'll try: I don't want Ray to be sorry."

And that was Jim's first and last run from home. When Ray came the next week, she found him as busy as possible, and as happy as she. And that is saying a great deal.

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Lionel's Sermon.

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WELL, MY DEAR FRIEND, THE LESSON YOU MUST LEARN FROM THE TEXT IS THIS LESSON—YOU MUSN'T BE GREEDY.

See p. 92.

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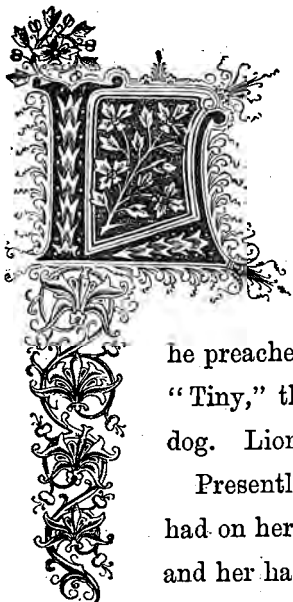
Lionel's Sermon.



IONEL was sitting in an apple-tree. There was a big bough that grew out and made a capital seat, and he called it his "pulpit"—first, because it was high up; and, second, because he preached sermons from it to Daisy, and "Tiny," the kitten, and "Fido," the little dog. Lionel liked preaching sermons.

Presently, Daisy came in sight: she had on her best frock and muslin pinafore, and her hair was unusually smooth.

"Lionel!" she shouted.

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"Hallo!" said Lionel; "what is it?"

Daisy came running up. "Oh, dear! I mustn't climb, because I've got my best things on," she said. "It's nearly four, Lion."

"I don't care," said Lion.

"You'd better come in and get ready: they'll be here soon."

"Daisy," said Lion, impressively; "I've got a sermon for you."

"It isn't Sunday."

"That doesn't matter: ministers preach on week-days too. Sit down, and I'll begin."

Daisy dragged a block of wood near the tree, and sat.

"Now I'm ready," she said, folding her hands; "don't be long."

"That's wicked!" said Lionel, severely. "You should never want sermons not to be long—sermons ought to be long. If you were a good girl, you'd say, 'Make a long sermon.' Now I'm going to begin.

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"Dear friends—"

"There is only me," interrupted Daisy.

"Oh, so there isn't!—I thought Fido was there. I'll begin again."

"Dear friend, we will take for our text the—oh, dear me, I've forgotten the verse! Never mind, dear friend, I can tell you without the Bible. The text is this—I learnt it this morning, at prayer-time. This is the text: 'Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?' That was Judas, you know. He sold Jesus: he was a devil. It isn't wicked to say so, because it's in the Bible. Well, you know, my dear friend, Judas was a very wicked man. I hate Judas —don't you? He wanted a lot of money—he was like old Crooks, who saved every farthing till he died—so he sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver! Think of that, my dear friend! wasn't it dreadful? Well, my friend, he was a devil; and I want to know if he's *the* devil."

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The preacher paused, and looked anxiously at his congregation.

"No; he's not *the* devil, because it was *the* devil that made him a devil," said Daisy, somewhat puzzled with such abstruse theology.

"Of course," said the minister, greatly relieved; "I didn't think of that. Well, my dear friend, the lesson you must learn from the text is this lesson—YOU MUSN'T BE GREEDY. Judas was greedy about money, but it's just as bad to be greedy about anything else. You took more than half the sweets gran'ma sent us—*that* was greed." Here the preacher put on a most severe expression, as he frowned at the little sinner below. "You took more than half—you know you did!—and I hope you'll never do it again, or you'll be like Judas; and he was a devil!"

"That isn't a proper sermon," said Daisy, in an injured tone.

"Yes, it is! it is a very proper sermon, and it's your

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guilty conscience that makes you not like it. You shouldn't speak in the middle of the sermon: I haven't done yet.

"Secondly, my dear friend, Judas told a lie. Papa says deceiving's a sort of lie; and Judas deceived, so he told a lie. And that's another reason, you see, my dear friend, why Jesus called him a devil: *the devil is the father of lies.* Well, my dear friend, I must now conclude, hoping—No! that's how to end a letter, not a sermon. Thirdly, my dear friend, I have now finished. Amen."

Jumping down from his pulpit, the preacher looked triumphantly at his congregation.

"Wasn't that a good sermon?" he asked, quite satisfied with his oratorical powers.

"You said I was like Judas," said Daisy, repressing a sob.

"Well, ministers must tell people about their sins," expostulated Lionel; "that's what preaching's for.

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Don't cry. It doesn't really matter—you only took one more than half; and I was obliged to preach about somebody, you know."

Pacified by this handsome apology, Daisy dried up the one tear which she had managed to squeeze out, and went in.

A great many people were coming to tea that evening, and everybody was hurrying about. Lion was soon ready; and he and Daisy ran out to meet the company, and answer questions before they were asked.

"Quite well, thank you—only she's got a little cough," he said in a great hurry, as he pulled Aunt Russell's bag out of her hand.

"Who has a cough?" asked Aunt Russell.

"Why, mamma! weren't you going to ask? Everybody asks how she is, so I make haste to tell them, to save trouble, you see."

Aunt Russell laughed, and very much admired the novel way of saving trouble.

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"Isn't this fun?" said Lion, presently, as he sat with Daisy at a little side-table. "Don't you wish we had company every day? I do."

"We couldn't have a christening every day," said Daisy; for that was what all these people were there for.

"They might christen us over again," suggested Lionel. "I'd like to be christened: wouldn't I choose a jolly name?"

"What would you choose?" asked Daisy.

"Well, I think I'd like to be called Robinson Crusoe; and you could be christened Friday."

"But I don't like Friday," objected Daisy; "it isn't pretty, and it isn't a girl's name either."

"Well, Daisy isn't a proper girl's name: it's a flower. You might as well be called buttercup, or—or rody-dendrum."

"You can't christen people twice," said Daisy, feeling secure in her pretty name.

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"I wish they'd let me christen the baby," went on Lionel, contemplatively; "I'd like to be a minister and drop water into the babies' eyes. I wonder if our baby will cry."

"Of course it won't," said Daisy, indignantly; "it's too good."

But the baby was not too good; for, when the drops fell on its face, it began to cry pretty loudly; at which Lion laughed, and Daisy was much scandalised.

As a great treat the two children were allowed to stay up to supper. There were all sorts of good things on the table. Fowls and tongue, and pigeon-pie, and almost everything you can mention.

Daisy and Lionel sat just behind their mother, and could hear all that she said to Jane.

"You must bring up some more lemon-sponge," she whispered; "they are asking for it at the other end. Be quick!"

Lionel turned very red.

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"What's the matter, Lion?" said Daisy.

"Nothing," said Lionel, fidgetting about and watching the door with nervous eyes.

"Be still, Lion," said his mother; "you shake my chair."

Lionel got redder and redder.

"How hot you do look, Lion," said Daisy; "your face is like fire."

"You mind your own business," retorted Lionel.

"Daisy," called her father: "come here!"

Daisy slipped off her chair, and went round.

"This is more in your way than mine," said her father, taking a grand pastry-rose from his piece of pigeon-pie. "Now run back."

Daisy went back with her rose. Why! where was Lionel? he was gone.

"Mamma, where's Lion?" she said, touching her mother's elbow.

Mrs. Macpherson looked round.

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"I don't know," she replied; "he was here a minute ago."

Daisy sat down and fidgetted. Where could Lion be? Minutes passed, and still he didn't come. Some one looked round, and saw her sitting alone.

"Daisy has lost her companion," he said. "Come here, Daisy: I'll take care of you."

So she went to the big table and forgot all about Lion.

When supper was over, they all went into the drawing room. "Now, Daisy," said her mother; "say Good-night, and go to bed."

Daisy said Good-night all round, and went out. First she went to the schoolroom, and called Lionel; but he wasn't there. Then she went to the nursery; but he wasn't there. Where could he be? She asked nurse and Jane, and then ran down to the kitchen; but there was no Lion—no one knew anything about him. At last she began to be frightened.

"Perhaps he's gone to bed," suggested Jane, who

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did not think it was at all likely, but was too busy to trouble herself.

Daisy seized the forlorn hope, and went up to Lion's little room.

"Lion," she said, doubtfully: and a voice under the bed-clothes answered, "Yes."

In a moment Daisy was on the bed.

"Why, Lion! what made you come to bed?" she exclaimed, as a rough little head slowly appeared from the depths.

"Did they call me greedy?" said Lion.

"Who?" said Daisy, staring at him.

"All of them."

"What for?" asked Daisy, puzzled.

"For taking the lemon-sponge," replied Lion, remorsefully.

"Did you take any?" said Daisy, opening her eyes still wider.

"They'd filled up all the glasses, and I thought they

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wouldn't want any more. They eat such a lot," said Lion, trying to put on an injured air.

"Oh, Lion! did you eat all in the big can?"

"It wasn't so very much."

Daisy was speechless.

"Did Jane say it right out loud for everybody to hear?" asked Lion, after a bit.

"I didn't hear. Oh, Lion, you were greedy!"

"I don't care," muttered Lionel.

"You are like Judas now," said Daisy, just a little bit triumphantly.

"You go to bed," said Lion, crossly. "There's nurse calling you."

So Daisy went to bed, and Lion fell fast asleep and dreamed of lemon-sponge.

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The Birthday Treat.

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THEY FOUND CRABS AND ALL SORTS OF FUNNY THINGS AMONG THE ROCKS AT LOW TIDE.—*See p.* 115.

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The Birthday Treat.

"I'D like to be a ministering children," said Lionel, pensively.

"A ministering child," corrected Clarice.

"Why can't we?" asked Daisy.

"'Cause there arn't any old women and people to pick wood up for. I'd like to pick up wood for poor people. I wish we had some very poor people here," said Lionel, regretfully.

"That isn't the only way of ministering," said thoughtful Clarice; "you were a ministering child when you got things for the bazaar."

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"Let's have another bazaar," suggested Lionel; "I like bazaars."

"Perhaps we will next winter."

Clarice went off, and Lion and Daisy sat on the door-step. It was a favourite place of theirs, this door-step: it was at the side of the house, and close to the shrubbery, and had a sunny little lawn in front. Here they often came to learn their lessons and talk, for they were rare little chatterboxes.

"I've been thinking," said Lionel, impressively.

"What about?" asked Daisy, who was the recipient of all this young genius's bright ideas.

"About our birthday treat. I know what we'll have."

It was the fashion at the Home Farm for the children to choose their own birthday treat. Lionel's and Daisy's birthdays came within a few days of each other, and were always kept together. It now wanted about six weeks to the time, and they formed a new scheme

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regularly every day. Some of them were magnificent. Daisy was anxious to hear Lion's happy thought.

"Now, don't you speak, and I'll tell you slowly," said Lionel. "We'll—ask—papa—to—take us—to London! there!"

Daisy clapped her hands. "Oh, Lion! will he, do you think?"

"Of course he will. And then we'll go and see Jim and Ray. Now isn't that a splendid thought?" And Lion looked triumphant.

"Let's go and ask him," suggested Daisy.

"Wait a bit, there's something else. We will ask him to let us take Jim and Ray out into the country, like those children we read of. Oh, won't it be fun!" and Lionel tossed his cap in the air at the prospect.

Again Daisy prudently suggested that they should straightway ask papa. They could just see the top of his head as he sat in the arbour, so they set off at once.

Mr. Macpherson listened patiently.

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"A nice thing to come and ask me!" he said, pathetically; "to take a parcel of children up and down London streets!"

"No! out in the country!" cried Lionel.

"But you are in the country now."

"Yes, but we want to take Jim and Ray."

"Oh, oh! pure philanthropy! And can't Jim and Ray go into the country without you going to London to take them?"

"No! not unless you have them here," said Lion, sturdily; "they'd get lost by themselves."

Daisy gave a funny little jump and a scream.

"Oh, papa! let them come here!" she cried, almost breathless at the idea. "We'd show them everything, and let them play in the hay! Do let them, papa!"

"If I say 'Yes' now, you will find there is something you would like better to-morrow. Be off with you. Settle it between yourselves, and don't say anything more to me till the week before," said their father, laughing.

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Off ran the children, to find their mother and tell her the new scheme. To their delight, she was quite willing, and entered into it with all her heart.

"Do as your father tells you," she said; "think it over, and make up your minds before you say anything more to him. You can talk it over with me and your brothers and sisters."

Their own importance almost turned the children's heads the next few weeks. They consulted everyone, and asked everybody's advice, upon a hundred-and-one funny things:—"What should they say to Jim and Ray? Should they take them to the river and teach them to catch minnows? Should they show them the new threshing-machine?" And a number more of the same sort.

At last the important "week before" came, and Lionel and Daisy were in a state of intense excitement.

"Suppose papa says 'No,'" said Lionel. And Daisy was dismayed at the very idea of such an awful thing.

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But papa did not say "No": he laughed at them, and asked what they meant to do with Jim and Ray, when they had got them; but he said "Yes," for all that.

"Are you going to put Ray in your doll's house and make a penny-peepshow of her?" he asked. And Daisy was highly indignant.

Then came something that almost took the children's breath away. Instead of coming for one day, Jim and Ray were to come for a whole week! No wonder there were no lessons learned that evening; but it was close to holiday-time, and they were forgiven.

The day before Daisy's birthday came, and she and Lion and Clarice drove with their father to the station, there to meet a little girl and boy from London. It was a funny meeting.

The two boys just stared at each other; but Daisy took Ray's hand tight in hers, and held it all the way home. Then mamma came out to meet them, and actually kissed both the little strangers; upon which

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Daisy must needs follow her example, to Jim's evident discomfiture: he was not used to such ways.

It was good to see how the two Londoners enjoyed the strange, beautiful country, which was like Fairy-land to them. They were out in the woods and fields all day, and at night slept too soundly for dreams. Sometimes the whole family had tea in the hay-field; sometimes in the wood, and sometimes in the garden under the shade of the trees. Everybody conspired to spoil their visitors. Lionel's generosity was alarming—he gave away so many of his treasures. Daisy and Ray struck up a violent friendship, and confided to each other all their secrets. And so a whole fortnight glided away; for the promised week was lengthened, much to every one's delight. Ray's cheeks looked rosier than ever, and Jim was like another boy—he did not look cross or sulky once all the time he was there.

Lionel told him all about the bazaar, and what beautiful things he and Daisy had got; and Jim

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thought a bazaar must be a very beautiful thing. He had never heard of one before.

Sometimes Jim used to tell them tales—funny tales that made them laugh, and sad tales that brought the tears to Clarice and Daisy's eyes. He told them of his wandering life before he went to the Home; of the cold, and want, and hunger, that he had felt. And then he told them of his little chum Jamie, who had been run over in the streets, and carried to the hospital, where he had died; and Daisy hid her face in her mother's dress and cried, like the tender-hearted little maiden that she was; and even Lion winked hard, in a very suspicious way.

But to Clifford, Jim confided more: he told him all about his escape from the Home, and how glad he was he went back. And Clifford promised to write to him very often, and try and help him to be obedient to the rules and to his master. It seemed strange to Jim to have a boy a very little older than himself to talk to

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about such things, and somehow he felt much easier in his mind, and being good didn't seem so dreadfully hard.

"I guess you are always good, aren't you?" he said. And Clifford laughed.

"Indeed, no!" he answered; "no one is always good."

"She is," said Jim, emphatically, pointing to the mother, who sat nursing Daisy and telling her and Ray a tale.

"Yes," said Clifford; "I think *she* always is."

Some very funny things happened during the fortnight. The first thing that made the children laugh was Ray's astonishment when she saw them run over the meadow.

"Oh, don't! oh, don't!" she cried: "you mustn't tread on the pretty flowers!"

And they could scarcely get her to believe that it didn't matter, and that buttercups and daisies didn't mind being trodden upon. Then, when Margaret gave

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her a dear little downy chicken, she wanted a cage to keep it in, evidently thinking it was something after the canary order. And the best of it was, Ray did not mind being laughed at one bit; indeed, she laughed at herself as much as anybody.

But the greatest treat of all came quite unexpectedly one morning. The children at the Home Farm did not spend the beautiful, bright morning-hours in bed—they were up at six, and out in the garden or farm-yard soon after. One morning, when they came down, they found breakfast ready, and their mother at the head of the table waiting to begin. At such an unusual thing they stood still in amazement.

"Why, mamma!" cried Lionel; "what are we having breakfast for so early?"

"If you wait, you will see," was the mysterious reply; and they could get no other. Everybody else was in the secret—Papa, Miss Neil, Stephen, Margaret, Clarice, and Clifford. It really was very provoking.

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In vain Lion guessed, and Daisy coaxed; not one word could they get, and their curiosity became excited to a most alarming extent.

"It's a good thing they will soon know, or I am afraid the consequences would be serious—eh, Lion?" said his father.

"Papa, are you going to drive us to Lynn's Wood? That's it! I've got it!" shouted Lion, after a serious consultation with Daisy. "Now, papa, isn't that it?"

"No," said Mr. Macpherson, and Lionel had to begin again.

Presently Mrs. Macpherson rose.

"Now," she said; "if anyone wants to find out the secret, they must come with me."

As the four children ran after her, Lionel caught sight of the waggonette coming round the corner, and at the same moment Jane brought a huge hamper from the kitchen, where Miss Neil was still busy, and put it down in the hall.

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"It's a picnic! it's a picnic!" he shouted, dancing about like a little wild Indian, until Clarice laid forcible hands upon him, and covered his head and eyes with a large straw hat, new for the occasion. There was one for Jim, too; and presently down came Daisy and Ray in cool holland frocks and jackets and large sun-hats. The waggonette was at the door, and Stephen and Clifford had stowed away the hampers, and soon everybody was ready. And off they started.

Still Lionel and Daisy could not tell where they were going. They went down a road which led to no wood, so where could they be going to have a picnic?

But the mystery was solved at last. Mr. Macpherson drew up at a little country station, the hampers were put into the train, and Tom drove back alone with the waggonette.

"Now, then, in with you!" said Mr. Macpherson, as he lifted the little ones in.

"Where are we going, Lion?"

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"I know! I know!" shouted Lionel; "we are going to the sea! isn't that it, mamma? Oh, be quick and say."

Yes, that was it: the secret was out at last. Jim and Ray had never seen the sea, so Daisy and Lionel tried to prepare their minds for the wonders before them. They gave glowing descriptions of the yellow sands and little white-crested waves that were always singing, and of the white-and-pink and yellow shells that were to be picked up by scores, and of the tall lighthouse built on a rock. No wonder Jim and Ray couldn't speak!—they could only look and listen.

"We'll dig big holes in the sand—oh, dear! we didn't bring our spades!" said Lionel.

"Didn't we?" said his father, drawing to view the wooden handles from under the seat. "What would be the use of going to the sea-side without spades?"

"May we have a donkey-ride, mamma?" asked Daisy.

"Yes."

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"And a bathe in the sea?"

"Yes."

"And dinner and tea among the rocks?" cried Daisy, clasping her hands in an ecstacy.

"Yes."

"And go in a boat?" chimed in Lionel, for the prospect of so much happiness took away Daisy's power of speech.

"Yes."

Well, after that, there was nothing left to wish for—nothing at all! All they had to do was to wait.

But they had not to wait long. The train they took at the little country station carried them straight to the sea, and before long they were down on the marvellous sands. But Daisy and Lion had not half described all the beauties to be seen! The sea was far more wonderful than they had pictured it; and the greatest wonder to Ray was, that such a large piece of water did not wash all the sand and the land and the houses away.

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They had donkey-rides, when Jim's donkey always would be first—they went into the sea, and Ray laughed so much that the salt water would run down her throat—they found crabs and all sorts of funny things among the rocks at low-tide—they gathered periwinkles by the hundred, and threw them away again—they peeped under the rocks and sea-weeds, and saw lovely starry "flowers," as Ray called them, but which were really anemones. It was a day to be remembered.

Then there was dinner under the cliffs, when everybody found that the hampers contained just what they liked best, even lemon-sponge for Lionel. But dinner was not so much fun as tea, because of the fire. The boys made a fireplace of stones, and slung the kettle over, and soon had a roaring fire underneath it. True, it was hot work; but what did that matter?—who minds getting hot at a picnic by the sea-side?

The little crabs came up to know what was going on, but sidled off when Lion tried to catch them. Some

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fishermen's children peeped at them from behind the rocks, and curtsied when Ray and Daisy took them cakes. Then, after tea, they went for a row in a big boat, and papa and the boys pulled. Daisy and Ray leaned over the side, and dipped their hands in the cool, clear water, and caught long pieces of seaweed to take home.

And then came sunset and the journey home. Oh, dear! what tired little feet those were that toiled up-stairs to bed! and what sleepy eyes that would not stay open till the Good-nights were said! The Dream-angel did not go near the Farm that night—everybody was too soundly asleep to take any notice of him. But often afterwards he revisited a little bed in a big room in London, and another little bed in a small room, and whispered to their occupants curious tales of the wonderful sea, and recalled to their memory the day on which they first saw it.

"If I hadn't come back to the Home, I should never

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have had that jolly day!" murmured Jim, one night, waking from a dream. "I'm glad I came back."

"You and me are ministering children," said Lionel, in confidence, to Daisy. "We were kind to Ray and Jim, weren't we? I like being ministering children."

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No Place for the Likes of Jamie.

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THERE HE STOOD, WITH THE LIGHT SHINING FULL ON HIS GOLDEN CURLS. JAMIE LOOKED AT HIM WITH CURIOUS EYES.—*See p.* 120.

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No Place for the Likes of Jamie.

CHILDREN'S PARTY! Oh, my! let's have a look at the little swells!"

And Jamie drew close to the railings, and watched with eager interest each carriage-load deposited at the brilliantly-lighted hall-door.

Poor little Jamie! Little of brightness and joy had his life seen. Forsaken by his father, cursed and beaten by a cruel, drunken mother, treated with roughness and suspicion all round, he lived the usual life of a

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city outcast—roaming the streets all day, and stealing back at night to the filthy crowded room which was all he had of home. And now he stood watching, with all a child's love of sight-seeing, the bright scene before him. Presently a little boy came to the door and looked out. Velvet knickerbockers, white waistcoat, hair scented and curled. There he stood, with the light shining full on his golden curls. Jamie looked at him with curious eyes.

"He's no bigger nor me," he muttered; "guess I could wear his things." And he glanced down on his bare legs and dirty rags, with a smile of amusement at the thought of himself in such fine clothes.

Just then the little boy's eyes fell upon him, and a look of indignation crossed his face.

"Go away!" he exclaimed angrily; "this is no place for such as you."

A policeman standing near raised his hand; but Jamie, with a strange lump in his throat and a mist

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before his eyes, dodged the expected blow, and sprang across the pavement into the muddy street.

There was a sudden stir and bustle, and people stopped to inquire what was the matter. "Only a street-boy run over," was the careless reply; and they passed on, remarking, "It's a wonder more are not killed—they are always under the horses' feet."

"Only a street-boy!" They carried him to the hospital, and laid him in one of the children's cots. He was not run over, but received a blow, and fell with his head on a stone. All night long he was delirious. Once, when the nurse spoke to him, he threw up his thin arms, crying piteously: "I tried to get out of the way; he said that was no place for the likes o' me, and I tried to get away. Oh, don't!" And up again went the little arm, as if to ward off a blow. Gently and kindly was the little lad tended in this, one of Christ's own institutions; but the Angel of Death was overshadowing

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him, and the nurse knew it. One day he rallied, and gazed with languid interest round the room.

"What place is this?" he asked.

"A place for little boys and girls to come to when they are ill—little ragged boys who have no home," replied the nurse.

"A place on purpose?" said Jamie, with wide-open eyes. "Builded on purpose for ragged boys like me?"

"Yes," said the nurse, smiling.

"Why, I thought they only had prisons *on purpose* for us! Shall I live here always, when I gets well?"

The nurse hesitated: she well knew that Jamie's "always" would be, at the longest, only a week or two. Bending over the cot, she said gently, "Do you want very much to get well, dear?"

The child looked at her, and suddenly the truth broke upon him. The blue eyes dilated with terror, and the thin arms were thrown up in an agony.

"Am I going to die? Oh, don't let me die! I dare

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not die! I shall go to that dreadful place and be burnt! Oh don't—please, don't let me die?"

"Jamie," said the nurse, "you will not go to any dreadful place; you may go to a beautiful place and live with Jesus, if you ask Him."

"Oh, no! no!" shrieked the child. "They told me I should go *there!* They always said so!"

Oh, England! beautiful, happy, Christian England! This is the way hundreds of your little ones are taught to die! From their infancy they are constantly hearing themselves consigned to everlasting perdition. Is it any wonder they look upon death as an awful mystery?

Look at the death-bed of a Christian child—one who has been led to Jesus. The sweet eyes, full of love and trust, while the childish voice gasps, "Don't cry, mamma; I'm going to be with Jesus, in my beautiful home." Oh, Death! where is thy sting? Oh, Grave! where is thy victory?

Look again—he is only a street-boy. The little form

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writhing in anguish, piteous eyes full of entreaty, voice choked with sobs, pleading for life—"*Oh! don't let me die!*"

And Jesus said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me."

But Jamie heard the "old, old story," and received it with a child's unwavering faith—heard for the first time in his life the sweet story of a Saviour's love—and then he longed to die. All fear was gone. Jesus was indeed to him a Good Shepherd. Long days and nights of wearying pain brought him nearer home, and one night the summons came. He was moaning in his sleep, and the nurse, bending over him, heard the words that had been so often on his lips during his delirium, "This is no place for the likes o' you."

Oh, little Jamie! there seemed indeed to be no place for "the likes o' you." No place in the beautiful rooms and well-kept nurseries; in the lighted hall, or even on the steps outside! No place in the wide world for the

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weary little feet, no pillow for the weary little head, no home for the outcast. So Jesus took him.

No more oaths and blows and curses; no more sleepless nights and weary days. Happy little Jamie! you have found your place in the great Children's Home above.

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